

SAMARITAN CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

OUR STORY TOO

LESSON 4, STRUCTURES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

In Lesson 4 you will examine the constant and basic structures of Christianity, namely its symbols, rituals, and institutions. A major premise of this lesson is that Christianity at any given time and place is a defined community with a set of beliefs and ceremonies. The reading assignment for this fourth lesson is pages 57 - 89 of Frankiel's book *Christianity*. Read these pages all the way through. Then go through them again, section by section, and answer the study questions in the space provided.

Then make a clear photocopy of your study question pages with your responses, or type your responses on separate sheets of paper. Send this second copy of your responses back for grading to the Samaritan faculty member who coordinates correspondence courses. The address is on the cover letter.

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- (A) Christianity, Chapter 3, pages 57-61,
"The Christian Story" and "The Meaning of Salvation"
- (1) Note that Frankiel uses the word "myth" in its original, philosophical sense, that is a story that is spiritually true, a story that sets forth the truth(s) of a religion. This is obviously different than the usual contemporary meaning of "myth" as a false story. A myth may or may not be historically accurate; what makes it a "true" myth is whether it accurately and powerfully presents the insights/truths of that religion.

In a one-paragraph essay explain why the Jesus story or Jesus myth is central to Christianity.

- (2) Different versions of the Jesus myth present Jesus' ultimate nature in different ways. All the stories about Jesus agree that he was a teacher and healer, but Jesus' ultimate nature is portrayed in at least three different ways:

as a _____, as the _____, and as _____.

The Jesus stories that came to be included in the Christian Scriptures (New Testament) give prominence to Jesus's _____ and _____.

- (3) The basic Jesus myth, although interpreted in multiple ways throughout Christian history, has always been interpreted with two important aspects:

(a) Jesus is a _____.

(b) Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection are a _____.

These two aspects of the Jesus myth have each been emphasized by certain Christian groups, but they have also been combined by some Christians. Since the central meaning of the Jesus myth is _____, the imitation of Christ becomes a _____, that is becoming a part of the _____ that transformed all of existence.

- (4) The fundamental divine miracle of Christianity is the _____.



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- (5) Although different views of this fundamental divine miracle (#4) have appeared at different times in Christian history, the general Christian understanding of this event is as follows:

God became a _____ in order to take on the fundamental human condition of _____. Yet Jesus did not _____ nor did he have any _____. Instead Jesus suffered the punishment, namely _____, for the _____. Jesus was then _____. From that time forward it would be possible for human beings also to be _____ if they

- (a) _____
(b) _____
(c) _____

Beyond this gift of salvation, God offered to Christians and to the church as a body another gift, _____, as a _____ making them _____.

- (6) In this Christian understanding, the experience of salvation is a rebirth to a new life. The movement of the seeker is:
from _____
through _____
to taking on _____
and receiving _____

The experience of salvation involves first a sense of freedom. Briefly explain.

In addition, the experience of salvation brings a sense of _____ and sometimes even _____.

- (7) Explain in a one-paragraph essay why Christians in one generation may have an immediate sense of the divine presence while Christians in subsequent generations would focus on future hope.

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- (8) Whether salvation is conceived in terms of present experience or future promise, its reality has almost always been mediated in Christianity through ritual. The various rituals for this mediation have been:

(a) receiving of _____
(b) the discipline of _____
(c) the channels of _____, _____ or _____

- (9) The early church developed a series of rituals as vehicles of the transforming experience of salvation and new birth:

(a) _____
(b) _____
(c) _____

- (B) *Christianity*, Chapter 3, pages 61-65
"Spiritual Knowledge: Creed and Doctrine in Christianity"

- (1) In early Christianity people desiring to become Christians had to spend nearly a year in study, learning _____.

Before baptism, the candidate would be asked certain questions of belief. This shows that belief in _____ was a crucial standard for belonging to the community.

Most religious traditions emphasize practice far more than belief. Christianity, however, puts a great emphasis on _____.

- (2) The simple meaning of "creed" is a _____. From very early Christianity, however, creeds became part of _____.

The three creeds cited by Frankiel are:
_____, _____, and _____.

- (3) The creeds contain evidence of theological debates that occurred within Christianity. Why was God described as "maker of heaven and earth"?

Why was the creation of God described as "all things visible and invisible"?

Why is Jesus described as "suffering"?

Why is Jesus described as "begotten, not made" and "of one substance" with God?

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- (4) The word "dogma" literally means "_____". The creeds gave rise to dogma because Christian leaders felt that the faithful needed _____.
- (5) In a one-paragraph essay, explain what creed and doctrine as defining characteristics of Christianity imply about Christian faith.

- (C) *Christianity*, Chapter 3, pages 65-69,
"The Drama of Transformation: From Baptism to Eucharist"

- (1) Baptism is the primary Christian rite of _____.
It is understood as a powerful re-enactment of Jesus' _____.

In early Christianity baptism usually occurred on _____
after _____. It culminated with the
new Christian putting on _____, which symbolized
_____.

- (2) Following baptism is the rite of confirmation, which was originally an anointing with _____. This anointing could be viewed as the "Christing" of the believer in that "Christ" literally means _____. In confirmation the believer is said to become _____ and to receive the gift of _____.

In Eastern Orthodox churches, when is the rite of confirmation done? _____

When in Roman Catholic and most Protestant churches?

- (3) In early Christianity, candidates for baptism attended only part of the Sunday worship services, namely the first part of the service when _____. They were excluded from the second part of the service, namely _____. They would be allowed to participate in this second part of the worship service after _____.

- (4) The three prominent dimensions of the Eucharist were/are:
(a) _____
(b) _____
(c) _____

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- (D) Christianity, Chapter 3, pages 69-75,
"The Church As Holy Community"
- (1) There has always been a tension in Christianity between the ideas that all believers are equally holy and that the church needs leaders who are spiritual specialists. The question is whether holiness is the calling of all Christians or of a special few.

From the beginning the churches conceived of themselves as a corporate entity, or, in the words of Paul, as "_____."

As the head of the Christian church(es) in a certain city or area, the bishop was a central, unifying figure. Bishops understood themselves as continuing:
_____.

The unifying spiritual experience of Pentecost was when all of Jesus' followers received the gift of _____.

- (2) What did the church-purifying group in the fourth century known as the Donatists maintain about church leadership?

The Donatists were defeated by the mainstream churches, whose primary spokesperson was _____. This spokesperson argued that the church on earth could not be expected to be _____. He distinguished between:

- (a) the "invisible church", that is _____
and
(b) the "visible church", that is _____

- (3) Movements for purification illustrated the two convictions that:

- (a) The members of a Christian church are not _____
but _____.
- (b) The church should be _____.

Examples of purification movements in Christian history are the _____ of the Middle Ages and the _____ of England and America.

An example of a purification movement in America that has sought to minimize its contact with the world by forming nearly self-sufficient communities is the _____.

- (4) The sense of interrelatedness or corporate oneness in the church also led to the understanding that some Christians can function on behalf of the whole church. The most obvious example is the priests or presbyters (and pastors today).

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(4) (cont'd)

Other "orders" also developed in Christianity of a special few whose actions and dedication were believed to benefit the whole body. These "orders" included the five broad categories of:

_____, _____, _____, _____, and _____

Whereas in earliest Christianity, all members were called "_____", this term was later applied only to a few, especially spiritual persons.

(5) Leadership roles were viewed as an imitation of Christ. Bishops saw themselves as shepherd-leaders of the flock, and they assumed the place of Jesus in celebrating _____ and in their role as _____.

Kings saw themselves as earthly imitations or manifestations of _____. To symbolize this understanding, the crowning of a monarch included the religious ceremony of _____.

(6) Outside the regular leadership roles, the holiness model of imitation of Christ took other forms. In times of persecution of Christians, _____ were viewed as following in the footsteps of Jesus.

When outside persecution was no longer a problem, some Christians, known as ascetics or monks, felt called to imitate Jesus by:

- (a) conquering _____
- (b) giving up _____
- (c) devoting themselves to _____

(7) The Protestant Reformation contested the idea of spiritual specialists with the idea of the "_____." One of the original meanings of this notion was that any member could _____.

One Protestant group that followed this principle came to believe that the church should not have any ordained ministerial leadership to preach, that any member may feel called to preach, speak, or pray. This group is called _____.

The mainstream Protestant traditions, however, have maintained the idea of clergy whose role it is to interpret the Scriptures. These clergy must have _____ and should also have _____.

(E) Christianity, Chapter 3, pages 75-83,
"The Life of the Church"

(1) The church sees itself as continuing the Christ's work on earth: to bring salvation to humanity, to reconcile humanity and God.
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(1) (cont'd)

This salvation work of the church has three parts, each modeled on a different aspect of Christ Jesus' life:

- (a) the call to salvation - evangelism, spreading _____, calling people outside the church to _____.
 - (b) the continuing work of salvation, enacted in _____.
 - (c) bringing salvation to the world by establishing _____ and thereby _____ the world itself.
- (2) The work of (1)(a) above is the responsibility of every believer but to reach the non-Christian world Christian churches have usually appointed _____.
- (3) In a one-paragraph essay explain the sacrifice metaphor that has dominated Western understanding of the Eucharist.
- (4) The Protestant emphasis on the preached word (often to the neglect or minimizing of the Eucharist) offers a different kind of spiritual nourishment. Briefly explain how different senses or modes of reception are used for each of these nourishment/transformation events.
- (5) The Protestant preaching tradition of the learned discourse emphasizes the _____, whereas spontaneous preaching focuses on _____. While there are some Protestant churches at both of these poles, most Protestant churches, according to Frankiel, expect _____.
- (6) The annual cycle of the Christian Year is an attempt to repeat the work of Jesus by _____ and by celebrating them _____.

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- (7) For the Western churches, the date for Christmas is _____.
It is preceded by a four-week period known as _____.
The Western Christmas season lasts twelve days, culminating in
the _____ on the date of _____.
- Orthodox churches celebrate Christmas on the date of _____.
- (8) The period of forty days prior to Easter is called Lent.
Originally Lent was a time for _____.
Gradually the whole church came to observe Lent as a period of
_____.
- (9) - (17) Match one of the following days associated with Lent with
each description below.
- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| (a) Maundy Thursday | (b) Palm Sunday |
| (c) Good Friday | (d) Holy Saturday/Easter Eve |
| (e) Mardi Gras, Shrove Tuesday, Pancake Day | (f) <i>Ash Wednesday</i> |
- (9) __ the day before Lent begins
- (10) __ the last Sunday in Lent, the Sunday before Easter
- (11) __ a day to recall two commands or mandates from Jesus
- (12) __ a day to recall Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem
- (13) __ an all-night vigil
- (14) __ a day of carnival and feastmaking
- (15) __ the day on which ashes are smeared on one's forehead
- (16) __ a day to recall Jesus' trial and execution
- (17) __ a day to recall the Last Supper
- (18) The Thursday forty days after Easter is a major feast in Roman
Catholic and Orthodox churches. This day celebrates _____.
- (19) The Sunday fifty days after Easter is called _____.
This day is a celebration of _____.
- (20) Expectation of Jesus' return or Second Coming has repeatedly
throughout Christian history broken through the bonds of the
church's regular, repeated ritual and exploded in movements
called _____.

Persons and groups who are swept up with this conviction feel:

- (a) _____
- (b) _____
- (c) _____

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- (21) As an example of churches that have left behind the church year calendar, Frankiel cites the American Puritans. In a one-paragraph essay explain what the Puritans replaced the church calendar with and why they did so.

- (22) To continue Christ's work of establishing God's Kingdom or Dominion, Christians throughout history have often acted to _____
in accord with _____.

This impulse expresses the conviction that Christianity is not merely waiting for the Messiah to return, nor is it only concerned with ensuring the salvation of its members; rather the church has work to do during this in-between time before Christ returns, namely the work of _____.

- (F) *Christianity*, Chapter 3, pages 83-89,
"Jesus As Model of the Christian's Personal Life"
- (1) Christianity has a strong personal dimension as well as a corporate dimension. Like almost all other religious traditions and societies, Christianity has attempted to sanctify the primary rites of passage that individuals go through: birth, puberty, marriage, death.

Associated with birth are the rites of baptism and christening. Some churches, of course, do not practice infant baptism, but most do. The positive reason for baptizing infants is to use this rite as a means of _____.

The negative reason for baptizing infants is that _____.

At christening the infant is given a Christian or proper name, traditionally, the name of _____, to signify that this child _____.

- (2) Many churches have made puberty an appropriate time for _____, which meant _____.
- (3) As compared to other religions, Christianity has paid little attention to puberty. Frankiel thinks the reason for this is that puberty means the onset of _____, and in Christianity this has been regarded as _____.

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- (4) In a one-paragraph essay explain why the taking of vows and weddings superseded puberty rites in Christianity.
- (5) The Roman Catholic rite for the dying is called _____. This rite offers the individual an opportunity for _____ and then for _____.
- (6) Christian burial practices reflect an identification with Christ. Briefly explain.
- (a) the day of burial:
- (b) the marking of tombs:
- (7) Throughout Christian history there have been some Christians concerned with purifying themselves and others from sin. In a one-paragraph essay describe the second/third century rite of penance and explain why many people postponed it until late in life.
- (8) Because of human imperfection, the churches found this original form of penance (#7) too strict. In a one-paragraph essay describe the new form of penance introduced by Irish monks in the sixth century.

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- (9) While the ideal of a more Christly life has always appealed to Christians, there have been different understandings of what this means. Two of the primary models held up have been Jesus' ascetic lifestyle and Jesus' loving lifestyle.

When the ascetic model is held up, Jesus is viewed as one who _____. This ideal could be fulfilled only by Christians who were _____.

Laypeople could approximate this ascetic ideal by:

- (a) practicing _____
- (b) spending extra time _____
- (c) taking on short-term vows of _____
- (d) going on _____

- (10) The other primary model of a Christly life, that of a loving lifestyle, has often appealed more to _____ and has grown increasingly strong since _____.

